

Veteran leaves behind a legacy of volunteerism

Joseph Shea was the face of monument project; worked on new crematory building

By JUSTIN GRAEBER, CLIPPER EDITOR
JUSTIN@DUXBURYCLIPPER.COM

He was a big man, with an even bigger heart.

Joseph Shea died of a heart attack on Monday, Jan. 31. In addition to his family, he leaves behind a legacy of service to his country and the town that he loved.

"It's a big loss for the town," said Town Manager Richard MacDonald. "I consider Joe a



Joseph Shea

friend first, a caring Duxbury volunteer."

Shea served on many Duxbury committees, such as the crematory building committee. He was also the town's sealer of weights and measures for many years. He had a passion for the town's cemeteries. *[See an article Shea submitted to the Clipper shortly before his death on page 7.]*



Shea reads during the dedication of the base of the World War I monument in 2009. Restoring the monument became a passionate cause of Shea's after he discovered the shattered pieces, once thought lost, during a walk through the cemetery.

IN MEMORIAM

It was on a walk through one of the town's cemeteries where Shea found the broken pieces of the World War I monument. Reconstructing the monument because a treasured cause for Shea, and he saw it completed last year.

"He was my supporter when I presented the group my ideas," said Bryan Felty, who presented 3D renderings to the committee rebuilding the monument.

"He's the one that really embraced it ... When I presented, you could see a light go on in his head."

Shea was the face of the monument project. With its completion, Duxbury now has some kind of memorial to veterans of all the country's major wars. (Shea was a Navy pilot.)

"I admired his passion, and the dedication that he had toward preserving Duxbury veterans," Felty said. "That was just outstanding, you don't meet many people that have such a dedicated heart to a cause like he did."

Other members of the World War I group said they were devastated to learn of Shea's death.

"Joe was a truly dedicated and enormous part of our lives and our town," said Judi Vose, who served on the committee along with her husband Terry. "He had a wonderful nature that touched all of us who knew him and we felt his devotion to everything he cared about in this town. Our town will not be the same - ever."

Emmett Sheehan, who worked with Shea on the committee building a new crematory at Mayflower Cemetery, was also impressed with his dedication to the monument project and his knowledge of the town's cemeteries.

"Joe loved the town," Sheehan said. "He knew things that nobody knew, he poked through records."

On the crematory project, Shea impressed his fellow committee members with his military-like attention to details, collecting information on the retorts from all across the country and then sharing it with the group.

"He spoke to all three companies and knew all the technical jargon," Sheehan said. "He was a very technical guy."

However, Shea's impact on the people he worked with went far beyond the minute details of a project.

Sheehan said that Shea would often stop by his office to bring him information on the crematory, but the conversation would soon turn to other things.

"We'd hang out for an hour and a half just chatting about life," Sheehan said.

Shea was also a major presence at First Parish Church. Rev. Catherine Cullen said that he brought his talents for historical research as well as woodworking to First Parish.

"You walk down the aisle and there's something Joe either made or fixed," she said.

Shea had been a member of the congregation for over 40 years, and Cullen said he was a great help when she took over.

"I used to call him 'Father Joe,' he just knew everybody in the church," she said. "He was an important part of my ministry."

She said she would meet with Shea, who at one time or another held nearly every leadership position in the church, weekly.

Shea's wife, Jacqueline, passed away only a few weeks before his death after a long battle with cancer. He was devoted to his wife during her long illness.

"Part of his full time job was driving her up to the hos-

pital every day for treatment," Sheehan said.

Always a straight shooter, Shea didn't hesitate even during a difficult time to dole out advice.

"He told me, 'You know Emmett, you're not too old a guy that you shouldn't enjoy your family and your life ... take time to smell the roses.'" Sheehan said.

Cullen said she sent Shea a note after his wife's passing.

"I told him, 'The mission is now complete commander, it's time to focus on taking care of yourself,'" she said. "I'm sorry he didn't get the chance to do that."

Felty also felt that the loss of his wife had a major effect on Shea.

"I really think he died of a broken heart," he said.

Whether it was impacting the town through his countless volunteer projects, or impacting the lives of the people he worked with his easy-going

manner and deep, booming laugh, Shea leaves a legacy in the town that he loved so much.

"Many people will have to step into his shadow in order to try to help his light to keep shining for us all while remembering this amazing man," Vose said.

A memorial service for Shea will be held on Wednesday, Feb. 9, at 2 p.m. at First Parish Church on Tremont Street, followed by an Alliance Hosted Collation to be held in the Harvey Assembly Hall from 3-5 p.m.